

Asylum from Rape Petition

Issued by: **Black Women for Wages for Housework**



Women and children are 80% of refugees worldwide; an estimated 50% of women seeking asylum in the UK are rape survivors. Some countries, including Canada and Australia, and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, recognise rape as persecution and therefore grounds for asylum. Governments at the 1995 UN Conference on Women in Beijing agreed that this would be the policy internationally.

But in Britain, successive governments have refused to recognise rape as persecution and therefore grounds for asylum; in addition, rape survivors' asylum claims are undermined by institutional racism and sexism. This Petition aims to bring to the attention of politicians, other policymakers and the public, the vital need for legal, civil and financial protection for survivors of rape and domestic violence who face deportation.

We demand:

- 1) Recognition of rape and sexual violence as forms of torture constituting persecution, and therefore grounds for asylum;
 - 2) Abolition of the One-Year Rule which forces immigrant women who marry men with the right to residence in Britain to stay in the marriage for at least one year, even if the man is violent, or risk deportation; and automatic right to independent permanent residence for women whose partners are given Exceptional Leave to Remain, so that they need not stay in violent relationships for up to seven years to ensure their right to stay;
 - 3) Abolition of the Short Procedure for asylum applications which denies victims of sexual violence the time and compassionate environment they need to present their case;
 - 4) Benefits and other resources for rape survivors and their children pending the final outcome of their claim for asylum.

- It is well known that rape survivors must overcome great barriers in order to report the attack to police or other authorities.
 - Rape victims seeking asylum must give full details of their torture as soon as they arrive, without privacy, and when interviewers may remind them of the police or military who raped them.
 - Hostile interviewing and careless or non-existent translation make immigration interviews feel to many women like a second rape.
 - Many asylum seekers live under threat of deportation while at the same time caring for families in an unfamiliar society.
 - Asylum seekers are denied Income Support, Child Benefit and Housing Benefit, undermining rape survivors' efforts to recover and rebuild their lives.

Name

Address

Signature

IBWWFH says "Long before coming to Britain as immigrants or asylum seekers, Black and Third World women have contributed to the wealth of Britain and Europe generally, through centuries of unwaged and low-waged work under slavery, colonialism, bonded and indentured labour, and in other ways. We are entitled to a place of safety and to claim the money and resources we need which our work helped to create."

Introduzione

Please return to:

Black Women for Wages for Housework 
Crossroads Women's Centre
230a Kentish Town, London NW5 2AB
Tel: 0171 482 2496 Fax: 0171 209 4761